

RESOLUTION

Concerning Vital Records and Statistics for the City of New York*

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

BACKGROUND

IN 1978 an unsuccessful effort was made by the New York State Department of Health to have the Legislature consolidate by legislative amendment the vital records function of the New York City Health Department with that of the New York State Health Department.

The Committee on Public Health of the New York Academy of Medicine adopted a resolution on May 8, 1978 which stated that, "the Committee on Public Health of the New York Academy of Medicine supports continuation of the present system of vital statistics collection and analysis within the Department of Health in the City of New York and opposes any effort to remove this function from City authority."

The State Health Department has again proposed a legislative amendment which would effectively remove the city's vital records and statistics functions to Albany. The Committee on Public Health is faced again with the question of taking a position on this matter.

The arguments advanced in the 1978 Committee on Public Health resolution in behalf of retaining vital records and statistics in New York City depended upon the superiority of the New York City vital records intelligence gathering and analysis capability as compared to that of New York State and its more rapid dissemination of information to public health and legislative agencies. Further, the Bureau of Vital Statistics has had an income from service functions and federal support which exceeds its cost—a considerable factor in this era of fiscal stringency.

Despite rumors to the contrary, Commissioner Ferrer has personally assured the Committee on Public Health that it is his intention to continue the present record gathering and analytical activities of the Bureau of Vital

*Approved by the Committee on Public Health June 4, 1979.

Statistics. Further, it is his expressed intention of having continuing supervision of the Bureau by a qualified medical director.

Therefore, the Committee on Public Health adopts the following resolution:

1. WHEREAS, another proposal has been made to have the State Legislature approve consolidation of the vital records and statistics program of the City of New York with that of the New York State Health Department and,
2. WHEREAS, the capability and responsiveness of the State Department's vital records services are not on a par with those achieved by the Bureau of Biostatistics of New York City and there is no evidence that the State's efforts will achieve this status within the foreseeable future,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Committee on Public Health of The New York Academy of Medicine

1. Again supports continuation of the system of vital statistics collection and analysis within the New York City Department of Health,
2. Extends appreciation to Commissioner Ferrer and Mayor Koch for their stated intentions of maintaining at a high professional level the evaluation and health-intelligence-gathering functions of the Bureau of Biostatistics in the Department of Health in close association with its record gathering functions. To this end, it is the opinion of the Committee that appointment of a physician trained in biostatistics to head the Bureau should be made without delay.